

# REVIEWS OF BOOKS

## POPULATION

**Hill, Reuben, Stycos, J. Mayone and Back, Kurt W.** *The Family and Population Control: A Puerto Rican Experiment in Social Change.* Chapel Hill, 1959. The University of North Carolina Press. (London, Oxford University Press.) Pp. xxvi + 481. Price 63s.

FOUR YEARS AGO, the work of Professor Mayone Stycos in Puerto Rico attracted favourable attention because he brought some new ideas to the study of fertility in an overpopulated island. After conducting a pilot study involving a few searching interviews, he made a series of suggestions to explain the paradox that Puerto Ricans know about birth control and say they want small families but do not have them.

In the present work, after a couple of introductory chapters, matters are taken two main stages further. First, there is a description of a large-scale survey that was held in order to examine further a selection of the hypotheses derived from the pilot survey. Secondly, an account is given of a "field experiment" which "tested the conclusions of the survey by translating them into a series of educational programs". The final chapters of the book sum up the implications of the experiment; they show how "existing institutions for communication of knowledge and the present attitudes towards contraception are insufficient to produce rapid change in fertility behavior" and they suggest a programme of instruction, of ante-maternal health services and of public discussion of family limitation that should be more effective than the present Puerto Rican facilities.

The authors concluded from the pilot survey that it might no longer be sufficient to pose queries to elicit the simple answer "yes" or "no" where problems as complex as attitudes about family size and birth control were involved. In their large-scale survey, therefore, they used a method of inquiry under which the same type of question was asked at several different times in an interview—well spaced out—but on each occasion it was framed a little differently. The answers to these closely-related questions were

found to be remarkably inconsistent. For instance a man might answer "yes" to the question "is it best to have only a few children" and later say "yes" when asked "is it best to have many children". One might conclude from this that Puerto Ricans are either an irrational race or rather contemptuous of social surveys. The authors have, however, attempted a lengthy analysis of the replies in the belief that something significant can be drawn from the inconsistencies themselves. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 relate to this part of the inquiry and deal respectively with family size preferences, knowledge of birth control and use of birth control. If any simple lesson can be drawn from a complex picture, studied in considerable detail in the book, it is perhaps that while at all times the people say that they favour small families they make little effort at fertility control until the number of children born is already too large.

Faced with such improvidence, the authors understandably decided (Chapters 7, 8 and 9) that a programme of education was desirable. This programme was carried out by means of films, discussions and pamphlets and was directed towards three main ends: stressing the importance and value of family planning; emphasizing the need for discussion between husband and wife about family size; and explaining how birth control could be used. In order to ascertain the effects of the programme, follow-up interviews were held after two months and again after one year, and similar interviews were conducted with a matched group of persons who had not attended the educational programme. The outcome of the programme was an increase, on a modest scale, in the use of birth control and some improvement in the extent of communication between spouses. On the strength of their experience, and of an exhaustive statistical analysis, the authors conclude their book with Chapters 12 and 13, in which they suggest a series of practical steps whereby administrators can bring about a more effective curb on excessive population growth. At the end, they express the view that "Puerto Rico is in a position today to provide a model program for family develop-

ment and family planning" and draw the conclusion that such a programme would be successful.

If Puerto Ricans, in their comparative indifference to the use of birth control methods that they know and approve, are typical of other peoples in the Caribbean and elsewhere, then the outlook seems depressing. Although the authors were understandably cheered by the fact that their instructional course, which was well designed and enjoyed by the participants, led to an increased use of contraceptives, evidently only a few of the islanders who took part were sufficiently impressed to persevere for long in their efforts at family limitation. The trouble is apparently that they do not feel the need (or, in the authors' word "saliency") strongly enough—presumably they do not see how their standard of living could be advanced by a reduction in the rate of population growth. In the light of the description of this standard of living given on page 43 one might almost despair for the advancement of humanity. Even so, the general attitude in Puerto Rico is rather similar to that found by Lord Simon of Wythenshawe in Barbados and is perhaps comparable to that in some parts of India to-day. The coming of an effective and simple oral contraceptive may improve matters considerably by making it easier to inhibit fertility, but it may well be that even with "the pill" an educational task of colossal magnitude awaits the Governments of some of the less well developed countries. In drawing attention to this probable need the authors have performed a valuable service and their work will be studied with interest over a wide area.

P. R. C.

**Hauser, Philip M. and Duncan, Otis Dudley** (Editors). *The Study of Population, An Inventory and Appraisal*. Chicago, 1959. University Press. (London, Cambridge University Press.) Pp. xvi + 864. Price 112s. 6d.

THIS SYMPOSIUM, from the University of Chicago, is described by the editors as an "investigation of the status of demography as a science"; its purpose is "to provide an adequate body of fact for [the] formulation of policy in the field of population research" in the United

States. These contrasting aims are reflected in the contents of the book, most of which is taken up by a symposium of twenty-eight separate papers, divided into three groups. In the first group a brief survey of the historical development of demography leads naturally into a survey of the state of demographic studies to-day in various parts of the world. These chapters are followed by a section described by the editors as "virtually an encyclopædia of modern demography." Here, the data available for demographic investigation is surveyed—an essential consideration in planning population research. Then, the various modes of study of population statistics, fertility, mortality, population composition and distribution, growth and replacement, migration, projections and other topics, are considered in turn. These chapters make little mention of particular methods of study, or of the results of particular studies—this would be neither appropriate to the purpose of the book nor possible in the space available. Rather, the scope of each topic, and the modern approach to it are discussed in general terms.

Possibly the most interesting part of the book is the final section, which deals with the wider field of population studies—that is, the inter-relation of demography with other fields of scientific study. To the student of eugenics, the most interesting chapter in this section is that on genetics in which, after the statistical aspect of human genetics has been considered, the scope of eugenics—considered as the linked study of genetics and demography—is discussed, and the authors go on to consider what policies might be followed to improve or at any rate to prevent deterioration in the human stock. Although strictly speaking outside the scope of the volume, this illustrates the breadth of the field in which a knowledge of demography is essential. Other chapters in this section deal with, among other topics, ecology, geography, economics, and, last but far from least, sociology. This subject, which has perhaps closer links with demography than any other, makes a fitting close to the volume.

The limited space available in a review has prevented more than the briefest of accounts of the contents of the symposium being given. The general standard of the papers is high, as might